



VISIT CORK SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY (2023-2030)

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Mission Statement

Visit Cork aims to be the best Destination Marketing Organisation in Ireland, working with our partners in tourism to have Cork recognised as a leader in social, environmental, and economic sustainability for both business and leisure tourism.

Introduction

Sustainable tourism is defined by the UN Environment Program and UN World Tourism Organization as “*tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.*”

Visit Cork acknowledges its responsibility as Cork’s official tourism body to encourage, develop and establish sustainable practices in its own operations and across the Cork tourism sector.

This **Visit Cork Sustainability Strategy (2023-2030)** outlines the organisation’s vision and an action plan with short-term and long-term ambitions for the development of the sustainability agenda throughout the tourism sector in Cork. The principles and commitments to sustainability across the organisation’s operations are outlined further in the **Visit Cork Sustainability Policy (2023-2030)**.

The **Visit Cork Sustainability Strategy** and the **Visit Cork Sustainability Policy** have been developed by working closely with local stakeholders, including industry representatives, local government agencies and citizens. They are evolving documents that set out both short-term actions and a long-term vision for the organisation. These documents will be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that Visit Cork, on behalf of the tourism sector in Cork, is striving for excellence across the social, environmental and economic indicators, and producing more sustainable outcomes for our region.

This **Visit Cork Sustainability Strategy** outlines the ambitions and actions that the organisations will undertake and drive across the four pillars of: Governance & Operations, Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability.

Stakeholder Engagement

This strategy has been developed with support and consultation with Visit Cork’s industry partners and stakeholders. This includes the board of Visit Cork, Cork City Council, Cork County Council, Fáilte Ireland, Cork Chamber, Cork Airport, Irish Hotels Federation (Cork branch), and other relevant industry stakeholders.

Policy Principles

1. **Care:** this policy is created and implemented with care for the various elements of the Cork tourism industry and of the Cork region as a whole.
2. **Commitment:** this policy is created and implemented with a commitment to continue improving and developing Cork's Tourism offering.
3. **Cooperation:** this policy is created and implemented through cooperation with Visit Cork's various stakeholders and the wider tourism industry.
4. **Courage:** this policy is created and implemented with courage to challenge the current way of doing things and creativity as to how they can be improved.

Policy Alignment

The Visit Cork Sustainability Strategy aligns with the goals and ambitions of the following:

- Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028
- Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Cork City Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024
- Cork County Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024
- Cork City Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029 (currently being developed)
- Cork County Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2029 (currently being developed)

In addition, the Visit Cork Sustainability Strategy aims to support Ireland's Programme for Government and the Climate Act 2021, in which Ireland has committed to halving our greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero by 2050 at the latest. The Visit Cork Sustainability Strategy has also been developed in order to align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a particular focus on the following SDGs:



Visit Cork Sustainability Strategy: Actions and Targets

Governance and Operations

Theme	Objective	Indicator	Annual Action Plan 2023	Targets						GDSI Index No.	SDGs	
				2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029			2030
Team and Culture	Build a culture of sustainability within Visit Cork.	Visit Cork team is familiar with the organisation's sustainability strategy and policies and contributes to their ongoing implementation and development.	Include sustainability as a recurring item on staff meeting agenda.								DM-12 DM-13	SDG11
			Conduct a quarterly review of sustainability targets with Visit Cork team.									
			Conduct an annual review of this strategy involving the input of all Visit Cork staff.									

		Visit Cork Board support and input into sustainability strategy.	Annual review of sustainability strategy and policy with Visit Cork board.								DM-12	SDG11
			Sustainability a fixed item on the Visit Cork Board meeting agenda at each meeting.									
		Additional resources committed to driving sustainability for Visit Cork.	Hire a part-time resource or consultant to support and drive the ongoing delivery of sustainability targets for Visit Cork.								DM-8	SDG8 SDG11
		Measure and reduce annual carbon footprint of Visit Cork staff.	Work with consultant to begin measuring and tracking annual carbon footprint of Visit Cork staff in order to establish baselines.							Remove carbon to offset carbon emissions.	DM-8	SDG13
Procurement	Maintain an updated sustainable procurement policy that clearly defines procurement/purchasing practices, expectations, and requirements from suppliers.	All suppliers to demonstrate commitment to sustainable practices through a sustainability policy and/or a 3rd party	Provide information about the destination's sustainability strategy and performance in all RFP responses and	Review procurement policy annually in line with best practices. Create/update a supplier checklist.				80% of suppliers to have a 3rd party sustainability certification.			DM-9	SDG12

		sustainability certification.	sales information									
Certifications / Reporting Frameworks	Maintain an updated 3rd-party sustainability certification for Visit Cork office operations.	Visit Cork renews 3rd party sustainability certification annually.	Maintain GreenMark certification.	Maintain GreenMark certification.							DM-10	SDG12 SDG13
	Align Visit Cork sustainable destination strategy and performance to an official reporting framework.	Destination receives a third-party sustainable destination certification by 2030.	Work with local authorities to get a third-party sustainable destination certification.								DM-11 DM-19	SDG9 SDG11
Stakeholder Engagement	Evolve the Visit Cork sustainability strategy through widespread stakeholder consultation.	Annual survey issued to industry and other stakeholders (including hotels, venues, agencies, visitors, event attendees, clients, local authorities, local community, and citizens).	Begin to track sustainability indicators in the region and gather feedback on how Visit Cork could support sustainability actions in the local industry.	Identify a tool and/or method of gathering NPS and other feedback from visitors.	Implement a collective method of gathering feedback from visitors, used across the tourism industry and make Net Promoter Score a collective KPI for tourism stakeholders.	NPS of 50 or more	Increase NPS by 0.5 points annually.	Increase NPS by 0.5 points annually.	Increase NPS by 0.5 points annually.	Steady NPS or 52+ year on year	DM-1 DM-6	SDG11

	Establish a working group of tourism stakeholders to share ideas and drive sustainability initiatives for the region.	Establish a tourism Green Team to include a broad range of stakeholders who will work on strategic projects to support and promote sustainability in the Cork tourism industry.	Draw up TOR for a Green Team, convene and set targets.	Annual Green Tourism Awards re-launched.	Grow applications from 2024 baseline.	Grow applications from 2024 baseline.	Grow applications from 2024 baseline.	Grow applications from 2024 baseline.	Grow applications from 2024 baseline.	Grow applications from 2024 baseline.		SDG11	
Communications	Publicly communicate and report on progress towards Visit Cork sustainability objectives.	Summary of Visit Cork sustainability policy and strategy published on Pure Cork and CCB websites.	Summary of Visit Cork sustainability policy and strategy published on Pure Cork and CCB websites.								DM-20	SDG3 SDG9 SDG11 SDG12 SDG13	
		Visit Cork annual review includes sustainability data.	Include sustainability data in Visit Cork annual review.										DM-18
		Produce a visually attractive report on key sustainability targets and updates for publication each year.	Explore options for the creation of an automated dashboard tool for visual presentation of results.		Publish dashboard on Pure Cork and CCB websites.								
		Visit Cork newsletters contain a 'sustainability news' section.	Sustainability section in regular Visit Cork newsletters.										

		Quarterly newsletter dedicated to sustainability news.	Quarterly newsletter dedicated to sustainability news.									
Ensure that Pure Cork and CCB websites are both highlighting and prioritising the theme of sustainability.		Improved prominence and visibility of sustainability themes, including sustainable tourism providers, events, activities, and best practices. for suppliers, clients, and visitors on Pure Cork and CCB websites.	Update Pure Cork and CCB websites to enhance sustainability sections.									DM-20
		Sustainability information about key suppliers (i.e., hotels, venues, agencies, restaurants) including any sustainability certificates and credentials are highlighted on Pure Cork and CCB websites.	Update Pure Cork and CCB websites to improve visibility of sustainability sections.			All suppliers should be searchable on Pure Cork and CCB websites according to sustainability criteria.						
		Growth in number of best practices promoted through Visit Cork channels.	Upload 4 new best practices to CCB/Pure Cork website.	1 per quarter	1 per month		2 per month					

Environmental Sustainability

Theme	Objective	Indicator	Annual Action Plan 2023	Targets						GDSI Index No.	SDGs	
				2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029			2030
Sustainability policies and certifications	Increase in Cork Tourism businesses with a written sustainability policy and active 3rd party sustainability certification	Increase in number of hotels in Cork to have 3rd party sustainability certification (* as per GDSI, % refers to hotel room inventory)	Offer a subsidy to CCB member hotels to encourage initial certification through GreenMark partnership.	Develop a CCB Member Sustainability Charter which outlines requirements for CCB membership in terms of sustainability practices.	Aim for 80% of hotels (with 50+ rooms) certified	100% CCB members with formal, written sustainability policy.		100% CCB members with 3rd party certification		100% of hotels (25+ rooms) certified	SU-1	SDG8 SDG11
			Promote sustainability training and supports available to the industry.									
		Increase in number of tourist attractions to obtain 3rd party sustainability certification.	Identify top 10 attractions and establish baselines.	50% of top 10 attractions in Cork have 3rd-party sustainability certification.				All top 10 attractions in Cork have 3rd-party sustainability certification.				

		Increase in number of restaurants and caterers that have a commitment to sustainable food.	Host/collaborate on an annual event, in partnership with relevant food organisations, with a focus on sustainable food and 3rd party food sustainability certifications.								SU-10	SDG15 SDG14
Environmentally Sustainable Events	Increase in the number of events/conferences demonstrating excellence in sustainability.	Number of event organisers following the GDSI regenerative event checklist.	Include information on the regenerative event checklist on all Visit Cork websites and proposals.							All events and conferences comply with regenerative events checklist.	DM-20	SDG8 SDG11 SDG12
	All tourism providers committed to eliminate single-use plastic by 2028.	No single-use plastics to be used across the tourism industry in Cork.	Promote plastic-reduction and zero-single use plastic charter.	Establish a process for promoting and monitoring this target.				All tourism providers committed to eliminate single-use plastic by 2028.			SU-2 SU-9 DM-4 DM-16 DM-20	SDG12
	All tourism conferences and events committed to being 'zero-waste' by 2030.	All CCB members committed to a charter agreeing to eliminate conference waste by 2030.	Provide information on donation programmes for food and leftover event materials and begin to compile sustainable supplier lists.	Establish a process for promoting and monitoring this target.						All tourism providers committed to zero-waste standard in their operations.	SU-2 SU-9 DM-4 DM16 DM-20	

	All tourism conference and events committed to producing 'zero food waste' by 2027.	All CCB members committed to a charter agreeing to eliminate conference waste by 2030.	Promote zero-waste training and support programmes across the region.	Establish a process for promoting and monitoring this target.								SU-2 SU-9 DM-4 DM-16 DM-20	
Transport and Mobility	Actively promote the use of soft mobility to visitors and event participants.	Increase in use of soft mobility by visitors.	Improve information on soft mobility options for visitors, through website and online guides.	Work with local stakeholders to find a system for monitoring tourist mobility patterns.								DM-23	SDG3 SDG9 SDG11 SDG13
	Make it more attractive for visitors and event participants to use public transport.	Increase in use of public transport by visitors.	Start a dialogue with transport providers to discuss how to incentivise public transport use for leisure and business visitors, and how to measure this usage.	Work with local stakeholders to find a system for monitoring tourist mobility patterns.								DM-24	SDG9 SDG11 SDG13

Social Sustainability

Theme	Objective	Indicator	Annual Action Plan 2023	Targets						GDSI Index No.	SDGs	
				2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029			2030
DEI	Grow the number of tourism providers with a dedicated Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policy.	Number of tourism providers with DEI policy.	Promotion of supports, programmes, and best practices on DEI for tourism sector.	Create a best practice guide on DEI for the tourism sector and begin to monitor number of tourism providers with DEI policy. .		Host or co-host an awareness-raising event on the theme of DEI for different target groups.					DM-2	SDG 5 SDG 10
Accessibility	Enhance the experience of Cork for visitors with accessibility challenges	Increase the number of organisations in the tourism industry that are listed in the Visit Cork 'accessibility guide'.	Annual review of Accessibility Guide.		Set benchmark and identify baseline for number of accessible tourism venues and hotels in Cork.	Increase in number of accessible tourism venues.					DM-25 SO-10	SDG 9 SDG 10
			Develop the Visit Cork Accessibility Guide into the go-to resource for Cork Tourism accessibility information.		Tourism providers with accessible premises to be highlighted on Pure Cork/CCB website.							

Legacy and Social Impact	Create a strong legacy and social impact programme for MICE clients, including partnerships with local organisations and stakeholders.	Number of community initiatives listed as potential 'social impact' partners for conference organisers.	Host a focus group to gather public and community feedback on how the tourism industry can support regeneration and volunteering in community settings.									SO-11 DM-6	SDG 8 SDG 11
			Facilitate formal, non-industry partnerships to help clients to generate a long-term, positive impact and legacy in the destination.	Establish 4 strong partnerships with local organisations that offer social impact programmes which can support events clients to 'give back' to the Cork community.	Grow the number of social impact partnerships that are promoted to visitors by 4 per annum.	Grow the number of social impact partnerships that are promoted to visitors by 4 per annum.	Grow the number of social impact partnerships that are promoted to visitors by 4 per annum.	Grow the number of social impact partnerships that are promoted to visitors by 4 per annum.	Grow the number of social impact partnerships that are promoted to visitors by 4 per annum.	Grow the number of social impact partnerships that are promoted to visitors by 4 per annum.	Have a dedicated resource to support social impact and legacy from MICE events in the Cork region.	DM-26 DM-27	
			Update quality of resources on Pure Cork and CCB websites for MICE clients looking for social sustainability impact.	Host/support training on impact and legacy management for events clients.	Provide an impact or legacy framework and tools to event clients to grow awareness of social impact and legacy projects with MICE visitors.								

		Number of conferences that support (financial or non-financial) local community social causes and projects.	Provide all Visit Cork business tourism clients with ideas and resources to support local community social causes and projects								All conferences will have a commitment to leaving a positive impact on the Cork region.		
			Work with the Meet in Ireland team in Fáilte Ireland in establishing an effective a legacy and social impact programme										
Industry Networking	Protect and build social cohesion in the Cork Tourism Industry	Increased number of opportunities for the Cork Tourism Industry to come together with the focus on working towards our common goals.	Host in-person or online Visit Cork Industry Day annually and Keep Cork Meeting annual event in person.	Provide at least 1 in-person and 1 online forum per year for the industry which can be used to share information or network								DM-5	
			Host online Visit Cork Familiarisation Sessions if circumstances do not allow for in-person meetings.										
Community Engagement	Increase resident satisfaction and support of tourism.	Annual survey to local community and citizens to gather feedback on satisfaction levels with	Identify local partners who can work together on a community engagement initiative related to the growth and	Start an annual satisfaction survey of residents to establish baselines.	Grow satisfaction levels year-on-year.							SO-11 DM-6	

		tourism practices and developments in the region.	operation of tourism sector.									
Industry Excellence	Build reputation of Cork as a destination that focuses on best practice in employee engagement and wellbeing throughout the tourism industry.	Number of Failte Ireland Great Place to Work participants.	Support the promotion and recruitment of the Failte Ireland Employer Excellence/ Great Place to Work programme.			50% growth (from 2023 baseline of 21) in number of Cork tourism organisations accredited by Great Place to Work through Failte Ireland.					DM-3	SDG 5 SDG 10 SDG 8 SDG 11
Visitor Satisfaction	Increase in Visitor Satisfaction measured through net promoter score for Cork.	Experience service quality reflected in TripAdvisor ratings/Increase in Visitor Satisfaction measured through net promoter score for Cork	Post-event survey to all conference/congress attendees. Visitor satisfaction surveys to be carried out through industry partners.	Identify a tool and/or method of gathering NPS and other feedback from visitors.		NPS of 50 or more	Increase NPS by 0.5 points annually.	Increase NPS by 0.5 points annually.	Increase NPS by 0.5 points annually.	NPS of 52 or more	DM-5	SDG 11

Economic Sustainability

Theme	Objective	Indicator	Annual Action Plan 2023	Targets						GDSI Index No.	SDGs	
				2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029			2030
Data and Monitoring	Establish baselines for better assessment of Cork as a visitor destination through more effective use of data.	Increased use of data for benchmarking, marketing and sales effectiveness.	Collaborate with local partners to begin discussions around the development of a data-collection tool that will help to measure sustainability across Cork tourism performance and indicators.			Implement system to measure the economic value of legacy and social impact initiatives across the region					DM-16 DM-17	SDG9 SDG11 SDG17
Excellence in Sustainability	Promote and celebrate best practices in sustainability across the industry/	Increase in number of tourism businesses demonstrating best practices in sustainability.	Organise an annual Visit Cork 'Green Week' which highlights local sustainability case studies and best practices.	Target number of best practices: 5							DM-14 DM-15	SDG3 SDG8 SDG9 SDG11 SDG12
			Organise an annual Visit Cork 'Green Award' which incentivises local businesses to improve their sustainability performance.	Target number of applicants: 20								

Competitiveness	Sharing of information and training for the industry to improved business competitiveness as a result of sustainability initiatives.	Number of businesses participating in Green Tourism conference.	Plan to host a bi-annual Green Tourism Conference from 2024.	Host first Green Tourism in-person conference, to be repeated bi-annually. Target number of attendees: 200		Host Green Tourism conference. Target number of attendees: 300		Host Green Tourism conference		Host International Green Tourism conference in Cork.			
		Increase information available on relevant sustainability cost saving practices through Visit Cork websites and social media.	Development of online tools and guides to help tourism companies to improve sustainability performance and/or innovation.									DM-20	
	Extend seasonality through promotion of staycation tourism.	The region has a strong balance of activities and events that offer a year-round proposition to visitors.		Work on development of a tool to track and measure this indicator.								DM-5	
	Maximise the diversity of the Cork visitor experience to disperse visitors across our urban, rural and coastal communities.	Balanced mix of visitors across the county.	Promote varied itineraries that include a balanced mix of urban, rural and coastal attractions.	Work on development of a tool to track and measure this indicator.									SDG8 SDG9 SDG11

	Translate visitor satisfaction into visitor advocacy through social media and online channels.	Annual increase in 'satisfied' clients from business/leisure tourism.	Capture testimonials from satisfied visitors.	Work on development of a tool to capture visitor feedback across the industry.								
Provide support to the tourism and events supply chain to help increase suppliers' sustainability performance.	Support and organise sustainability training for the tourism and events value chain.	Number of tourism businesses that attend training.	Host or co-host an annual awareness-raising events/training for specific target groups on sustainability themes (minimum 1 per annum).	Target number of tourism businesses that register for sustainability training (hosted or supported by Visit Cork): 50	Target number of tourism businesses that register for sustainability training (hosted or supported by Visit Cork): 100	Target number of tourism businesses that register for sustainability training (hosted or supported by Visit Cork): 150					DM-14	
Smart tourism	Support and promote an increase in 'smart' solutions for the tourism industry.	Establish a partnership with Cork Smart Gateway to propose an increase in smart tourism supports and collaborations.	Host or co-host an annual awareness-raising events on smart tourism and smart initiatives for specific target groups on sustainability themes.								DM-15	SDG9 SDG11

		Submit an annual application to the EU Smart Tourism City awards.	Submit application to the EU Smart Tourism City awards.				Gain public visibility for improvements in smart tourism through the EU Smart Tourism City award.					
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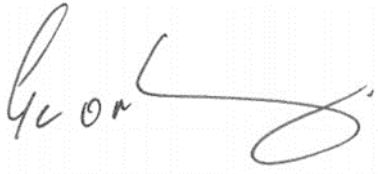
Review Schedule

This strategy will be an evolving document and will be reviewed annually.

These industry partners/stakeholders have agreed to assist Visit Cork in achieving the goals of this strategy, which will be implemented by the Visit Cork sustainability team containing:

- Seamus Heaney – Head of Visit Cork
- Evelyn O’Sullivan – Manager of Cork Convention Bureau
- Anne Cahill - Trade Liaison

Approved on behalf of Visit Cork by:



Gerard O'Mahoney (Chairman, Visit Cork)



Seamus Heaney (Head of Visit Cork)

Adopted:	26/05/23
Contact:	Seamus Heaney
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Next Formal Policy Review:	December 2023
Formal Review of Policy by:	Visit Cork Board